

Submission Date: _____

Priority: _____ of _____

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Ted Stevens

United States Senator for
Alaska

Please Note:

- Fill out one request form for each request
- This form (and any attachments) can be returned via:

Fax - (202) 224-2354

Mail - The Honorable Ted Stevens
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

- Requests are due by January 7, 2008.

FISCAL YEAR 2009 PROJECT REQUEST FORM

Project Name: Voyage To Excellence WorkKeys Expansion Project

Project Location: Anchorage, AK - AK Department of Labor Commissioner Click Bishop recommended we forward this request to you.

Project Description (continue on Page 2 if needed):

This request is for federal funds to build a new Voyage to Excellence school facility for the highly successful Voyage to Excellence (VTE) program operated by Chugach School District for secondary students from rural school districts across Alaska. For ten years the VTE program has proven results working with rural students from all areas of Alaska. The result is a remarkable 98% graduation rate (2003-2008). As of today, 39% of those graduates are still in college and 53% are in the Alaska workforce. The program has many descriptors such as; pre-apprentice, character education, employability skills, life skills, independent living skills, post secondary skills, and etc. VTE teaches all of those essential skills in real life application. The success of VTE students is positively impacting Alaskan youth. So much so we cannot currently support all the need and are turning students away. Our current facility can only house 12 students a session (approximately 150 students a year). The VTE-WorkKeys expansion project is designed to reach 1000 rural Alaska students per year. The need is evident and the VTE program provides students ready for the workforce and post-secondary training.

Related Appropriations Bill: _____

Amount of federal funding requested for FY09: \$12,743,000

Total funding to complete this project: \$12,743,000

Number of years to fund this project: one

Matching funds from the State of Alaska: _____

Matching funds from local and private entities (continue on Page 2 if needed):

If this project was funded in prior appropriations bills (within the last five years), list each bill and the amount funded (continue on Page 2 if needed):

Amount included in the President's FY09 Budget: _____

Amount included in the State of Alaska FY09 Budget: _____

☐ Check this box if state funding was sought but not provided.

List legislation that authorizes this project:

Check all that apply:

- ☐ A change in the current law is necessary in order to proceed with the project. (If so, attach language and a list of laws that need to be amended)
- ☐ Bill or report language is needed. (If so, attach requested language)

Project Description:

This request is for federal funds to build a new Voyage to Excellence school facility for the highly successful Voyage to Excellence (VTE) educational program operated by Chugach School District for the benefit of secondary students from rural school districts across Alaska. In addition to the VTE program, Chugach School District serves 250 students in Prince William Sound and via distance education. The Voyage to Excellence program currently serves approximately 150 secondary students annually from six rural Alaska school districts, with a yearly waiting list of over 100 more students and three more rural school districts currently requesting space in the program.

The Voyage to Excellence program capacity is bounded by the size of the current facility. Right now the program operates from a 3,600 sf residential facility in south Anchorage with a maximum capacity of 12 students per session, approximately 150 students per year. With a larger Voyage to Excellence school facility of 34,600 sf, the VTE program could immediately serve 1000 students each year based on current need and district requests. The Voyage to Excellence school campus would be used year-round because the VTE program includes a month-long intensive summer camp available to rural students, primarily for remediation of academic skills and preparation for the High School Graduation Qualifying exam. The current facility is used by rural school districts for school board retreats and professional development of staff between student sessions and it is anticipated that a larger facility would also meet this need more effectively.

While funding for education facilities normally comes from the state government, the unique nature of the VTE program causes the Voyage to Excellence School to fall outside those funding parameters. The daily operation and staffing of the current facility is under the management of Chugach School District while students come to the VTE program from Chugach, Bering Strait, Lake and Peninsula, Kuspuk, and Denali Borough School Districts. The districts often use federal Alaska Native Education grant monies to support student participation in the program, with other support coming from local Native organizations. Students stay at the school as boarders typically from one to three weeks at a time while remaining continuously enrolled in their home school and district. Since the state funding guidelines for new school facilities is dependent on student enrollment or FTE, there is never any gain of enrollment in Chugach School District to justify the larger facility the program needs. No one entity therefore is able to leverage state funding sources to expand the VTE facility.

The next section justifies the request for funds to build a larger Voyage to Excellence School based on the documented success of the Voyage to Excellence program. The budget section provides details of the proposed facility and current cost estimates.

Project Justification:

The federal No Child Left Behind Act places responsibility on school districts and personnel for ensuring that all students meet high standards. However, educational parity for Alaska Native students has remained elusive in many school districts. The Voyage to Excellence program has well-documented evidence of student success in achieving standards, including those measured by the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. Working with a variety of partners, the Voyage to Excellence Program has resulted in a phenomenal 98% high school graduation rate for program participants between the years 2003 - 2008. As of today, 39% of those graduates are still in college, 53% are in the Alaska workforce, and 8% are not working.

The Voyage to Excellence program has 10 years of documented success in achieving these goals:

- A proactive approach to keep teens in school (Alaska currently ranks 5th highest in the nation for teens not in school and not working)
- Provide targeted, individualized assistance to help students meet district graduation requirements and pass the HSGQE
- Provide teens with skills and assets for a successful transition from school to life through comprehensive life skills curriculum (several years of data show a high positive correlation between completion of the life skills curriculum and high state SBA achievement for VTE participants)
- Encouragement for students to apply newly learned skills in their home village and school (each district sends a teacher or Elder with their students to the VTE program)
- Individualized career and post-high school exploration, with emphasis on Alaska's high-growth occupations and regional job outlooks
- Provide a positive, highly structured, healthy urban experience for rural students

It is important to note that there are several things the Voyage to Excellence program IS NOT. First, it is not a traditional boarding school. Students come to Anchorage for one to three weeks at a time to complete the four phases of the program, and then return to their home school and village. The intent is for students to remain connected to their homes, families, and culture. When students come to the VTE program, they are accompanied by an adult from their home school or district who ensures student needs are met, both in Anchorage and when students return home.

Each phase of the Voyage to Excellence program has a different focus, and school counselors and teachers schedule each student's attendance in the program based on

student readiness and completion of curriculum precursors. Because of the individualized nature of the program, students may need four years to complete all four phases, or might complete more than one phase in a year. The summer EXCEL camp, in addition to targeted HSGQE weeks in the fall and spring, have been exceptionally successful in increasing student pass rates for the exam. A description of the phases of the Voyage to Excellence Program is attached to this proposal.

Education is an example of a social service that is co-produced by many individuals and groups working together to achieve the goal of highly educated students. Individuals and organizations invest a whole variety of resources in education because of the awareness that the benefits of education are shared by all: individuals, families, communities, employers, and the state and nation as well. Because of the value of the experience and the successful track record of the VTE program, it has long-standing business partnerships with local businesses including Providence Health Care System, Conoco Phillips, Alyeska Resort, Captain Cook Hotel, Associated General Contractors, Associated Builders and Contractors, Wells Fargo Bank, and Totem Ocean Trailer Express. The VTE program has a number of educational partners including NACTEC in Nome, Anchorage Youth Court, Alaska Job Center, Job Corp, UAA, APU, and UAF.

Voyage to Excellence has garnered significant support from some Native organizations as well: Chugachmiut, Chenega Corporation, Tatitlek Corporation, Chugach Alaska Corporation, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, and Bristol Bay Native Corporation, to name a few. The Native organizations assist with student guidance and counseling and referral to Voyage to Excellence. The Native organizations appreciate that students receive a highly structured urban experience while participating in VTE, with exposure to positive and healthy activities. They also value the program commitment to meeting individual student needs and interests with deep respect for students' culture.

As stated in the project description, the high need for a new facility to house the Voyage to Excellence program cannot be accommodated through the state process for funding new schools because no FTE is accrued to the host district due to the short-term nature of each phase. No single district has the ability to underwrite the expense of the school, though in addition to the five districts currently sending students to the program, there are three more with students already on the waiting list. The waiting list is currently over a year-long. The next section includes a facilities description and preliminary budget information.

Project Budget Narrative:

The attached Excel spreadsheet provides details of the proposed use for the 34,600 sf school. The school would be built in two phases, with four classrooms in each phase (total of eight classrooms). The dormitory area would include 20 bedrooms, each accommodating two students, for occupancy of 40 students at a time. Chugach School

District would manage the development of the new school as well as its operation once completed. To save on operating expenses and employee travel time and expense, Chugach School District would move the district offices into the new facility as well. Recent comparable designs are the Northwest Alaska Career and Technical Center in Nome, which has separate dormitory and classroom facilities. The NACTEC dormitory building is 10,000 sf with occupancy of 26 students and adults. In that project, classrooms are located in an adjoining building. Another project, The Pathway House recently completed by Southcentral Foundation in Anchorage was 25,700 sf with a construction cost of \$5M, or \$200 sf.

The current estimated cost for building a commercial project such as the Voyage to Excellence school in Anchorage is \$350 sf, for a total structure cost of \$12,110,000. Cost of the 5-acre land site in Anchorage, zoned for school use is \$423,000 and estimated cost for site preparation and finish work (paving, landscaping, etc.) is \$210,000. The total projected cost for the Voyage to Excellence School is \$12,743,000.